

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

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R 170426Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2254

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

QMEMBASSY MANILA 4499

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 0293

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT MY

SUBJ: NOTES ON RAZAK FUNERAL

FOLLOWING WAS DICTATED BY AMBASSADOR UNDERHILL JUST AFTER
INTERMENT OF THE LATE PRIME MINISTER TUN ABDUL RAZAK,
AND JUST BEFORE AMBASSADOR'S DEPARTURE FOR COM CONFERENCE.

1. RECEPTION OF RAZAK'S BODY AT AIRPORT EVENING OF JAN. 15,
FUNERAL PROCESSION FROM PARLIAMENT BUILDING TO NATIONAL MOSQUE,
AND FINAL BURIAL IN NATIONAL MAUSOLEUM, NEXT TO TOMB
OF HIS CLOSE COLLEAGUE, TUN ISMAIL AT ABOUT 1:45 PM JAN 16
HAD MUCH OF THE SIMPLICITY OF AN ORDINARY KAMPONG
BURIAL. FOR ONE ACCUSTOMED TO PROTOCOL AND FORMALITY
OF WESTERN FUNERALS, LACK OF STRUCTURE OF THESE FINAL
RITES WAS STRIKING. EXCEPT FOR INCIDENT NOTED BELOW,
LARGE CROWDS WERE DOCILE AND SUBDUED. POLICE LINES
MARKED LANE FOR PROCESSION RATHER THAN HOLDING CROWD BACK.
(POLICE HAD FIRST THREE LINES OF ONLOOKERS SITTING ON
GROUND WHICH SEEMED TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE BARRIER.

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2. TUN RAZAK'S COFFIN RESTED IN CENTRAL HALL OF

PARLIAMENT FROM 5:00 AM UNTIL 11:30 AM. HUGE CROWDS GATHERED AND AS 10:00 O'CLOCK DEADLINE FOR ORDINARY CITIZENS TO PASS BY APPROACHED AND THOUSANDS WERE STILL AWAITING THEIR TURN, CROWD WENT OUT OF CONTROL. POLICE RESTORED ORDER BUT DIPLOMATS AND VIPS ARRIVING AT 10:00 O'CLOCK FOUND ENTRANCE TO PARLIAMENT STREWN WITH SHOES, DEBRIS AND BROKEN FLOWER POTS AND REMAINS OF POTS AND FLOWERS. ONE SENIOR MALAYSIAN OFFICIAL TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT MANY ORDINARY MALAYSIAN PEOPLE WERE ANGRY THAT TUN'S ILLNESS HAD BEEN KEPT SECRET AND THAT INSUFFICIENT TIME HAD BEEN ALLOWED FOR THE ORDINARY MAN TO PAY HIS RESPECTS.

3. PRIOR TO DEPARTURE OF CORTEGE FROM PARLIAMENT BUILDING, VISITING DIGNITARIES CHATTED INFORMALLY IN A RECEPTION ROOM. PRESIDENT MARCOS, PRIME MINISTER KUKRIT, PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW HAD A MINI ASEAN SUMMIT AND WERE JOINED BY AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER FRASER AND FORMER AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM, WHO TOGETHER TOWERD OVER THEIR ASIAN COLLEAGUES. JAPANESE FLOE, MINISTER NIZAWA STOOD QUIETLY ON THE SIDELINES. BOTH AT PARLIAMENT BUILDING AND LATER AT THE LECTURE ROOM IN THE MOSQUE, WHEREAON-MUSLIM DIGNITARIES WAITED DUCSNG BUSTLED ABOUT AS IF HE WERE RUNNING THE FUNERAL. PHILIPPINE DELEGATION WAS IN FACT THE LARGEST. IMELDA WAS NOT PRESENT BUT MARCOS HAD WITH HIM TWO FOREIGN OFFICE UNDER SECRETARIES, COLLANTES AND INGLES, DEFENSE SECRETARY PONCE ENRILE, PRESS SECRETARY TATAD, AND A NUMBER OF OTHERS.

4. INDONESIA DELEGATION, LED BY THE SULTAN OF DJOGJAKARTA, PRODUCED SOME MINOR CONFUSION AT THE MOSQUE BECAUSE WHILE CLEARLY ETHNICALLY MALAY AND WEARING BLACK SONGKOKS, WHICH IN MALAYSIA IS WORN EXCLUSIVELY BY MUSLIMS, SEVERAL WERE IN FACT CHRISTIAN AND DID NOT JOIN IN THE PRAYERS. GENERAL PANGGABEDN, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS ASKED WHEN HE PLANNED TO MAKE THE HADJ. (EMB NOTE: LOCAL PRESS REPORTS SUHARTO COULD NOT ATTEND BECAUSE HE RECOVERING FROM GALL BLADDER OPERATION.)

5. THE COFFIN LEFT THE PARLIAMENT DRAWN BY POLICE AND
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MILITARY OFFICERS ON A GUN CARRIAGE COVERED BY MALAYSIAN FLAG. PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN BIN ONN, MEMBERS OF RAZAK'S FAMILY, INCLUDING HIS AGED FATHER-IN-LAW, MOST MEMBERS OF THE CABINET, AND HIS PERSONAL STAFF AND A FEW MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS WALKED IN THE FINAL PROCESSION FROM PARLIAMENT BUILDING TO THE NATIONAL MOSQUE. NONE OF THE VISITING DIGNITARIES FROM NEARBY ASIAN NATIONS JOINED IN THIS MARCH. IT IS ABOUT TWO MILES AND IN

MIDDAY SUN, IN FORMAL MORING COAT, IT WAS UNCOMFORTABLE
AT BEST.

6. FOREIGN MINISTER RITHAUDDEEN, IN CONVERSATION AT
THE MOSQUE BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF FRIDAY PRAYERS, SAID
THAT TUN RAZAK HAD BEEN INFORMED IN 1969 THAT HE HAD A
FATAL DISEASE OF THE BONE MARROW AND WOULD LIVE PERHAPS
TWO YEARS. HE GAVE STRICT INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS DOCTOR
TO INFORM NO ONE OF HIS CONDITION, AND HE HIMSELF TOLD
ONLY HIS DEPUTY, TUN ISMAIL. ISMAIL HIMSELF HAD BEEN
TOLD HE HAD ABOUT FIVE YEARS TO LIVE AND RAZAK EXPECTED TO
PRE-DECEASE HIM. RAZAK HADORJTOKDED HIS DOCTORS BY
SURVIVING FOR SIX YEARS. IN THE INTERVENING TIME,
HOWEVER, RITTAUDDEEN CONTINUED, INFORMATION ON RAZAK'S
CONDITION HAD GRADUALLY SPREAD. HIS CUSTOMARY USE OF A
CANE AND HIS PREMATURE AGING WERE VISIBLE EVIDENCE THAT
HE WAS NOT A COMPLETELY WELL MAN.

7. ALTHOUGH SOME OF THE FOREIGN GUESTS MAY HAVE BEEN DISCOMFITTED
BY THE LACK OF FORMAL ORGANIZATION, THE FUNERAL WAS IN FACT A
MOVING AND DEEPLY SINCERE TRIBUTE TO A PRIME MINISTER BELOVED
BY THE MALAY POPULATION AND RESPECTED BY MALAYSIA'S OTHER
COMMUNITIES.
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